

APPROPRIATIONS ALERT

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FISCAL YEAR 2009 MILCON/VA APPROPRIATIONS BILL (H.R. 6599)

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One of only two regular appropriations bills likely to receive House floor consideration in the 110th Congress is scheduled for debate today. The measure, the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs appropriations bill for fiscal year 2009 (H.R. 6599), provides \$72.7 billion in net discretionary budget authority [BA] for military construction, family housing, Base Realignment and Closure, and veterans medical services.

The bill also provides \$43.4 billion in mandatory BA and \$43.3 billion in outlays for several appropriated entitlements, bringing its full total to \$116.2 billion in BA and \$110.2 billion in outlays after rescissions and other adjustments.

House Democratic Leaders indicated early in the year that they intended to put off most of the regular appropriations bills until the next President is inaugurated, and H.R. 6599 will be the only such measure considered before the August recess. Only the Defense appropriations bill, and a continuing resolution [CR] running through January, are expected to be considered before the 110th Congress adjourns.

Key points about the MilCon/VA appropriations bill are the following:

- **Increases Over 2008 and the President's Request.** The \$72.7 billion in net discretionary BA is about \$3.4 billion above the President's request for fiscal year 2009, and \$12.5 billion above the regular fiscal year 2008 level. This includes \$47.7 billion for veterans programs, a 21-percent increase over 2008.
- **Scorekeeping Adjustments.** The bill does not include discretionary cap adjustments for program integrity initiatives, advance appropriations, changes in mandatory programs, or emergency spending.
- **Budget Compliance.** The measure is therefore within its 302(b) suballocation for BA. It exceeds its allocation for discretionary outlays by \$2 million, though such breaches are not enforced in the House.

Table 1: Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Independent Agencies Appropriations
(fiscal years; millions of dollars)

| | 2008 Level ^a | President 2009 | 302(b) for 2009 | H.R. 6599 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Discretionary Budget Authority | 60,224 | 69,347 | 72,729 | 72,729 |
| Discretionary Outlays | 52,557 | 65,227 | 66,890 | 66,892 |

^a Excludes emergency spending.